

# Saudi Arabia in Focus

The monthly update from the KSA's mission to the European Union



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## From the ambassador

### Saudi Arabia in Focus

Ramadan Mubarak!

During this holy month of Ramadan, it is fitting to remember that Islam is the religion of mercy, compassion, love and moderation, which calls for peace, justice and the renunciation of violence and extremism.

Already, this Ramadan, we have seen unspeakable suffering inflicted by the scourge of terrorism around the world. Despite its varied malicious motives, terrorism is a deviation from the normal instinct, and it does not differentiate between right and wrong. As such, we must redouble international cooperation efforts to combat and eliminate this threat.

Peace, mercy and blessings of God.



**Abdulrahman S. Alahmed**  
Ambassador and Head of the  
Mission to the European Union

## Strong Saudi-EU Relations at Jeddah Meeting



**On Monday 30 May, the Saudi Foreign Minister Adel bin Ahmed Al-Jubeir met with the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini in Jeddah where they discussed matters of common interest, including economic affairs, the fight against terrorism and the regional challenges being faced in Syria, Yemen and Libya.**

At a press conference following the meeting, the Foreign Minister said that Saudi Arabia and the EU enjoy strong ties in economic, political, educational and social spheres. In particular, High Representative Mogherini highlighted how Europe would contribute to Saudi Vision 2030 and underlined that the ambitious roadmap offers opportunities for bilateral cooperation between the kingdom and the European Union in various fields.

On the conflict in Syria, Minister Al-Jubeir thanked the EU countries for their support of displaced Syrians and for a political solution. Minister Al-Jubeir said that there is an international consensus that the solution includes an establishment of a transitional governing body that

removes power from Bashar al-Assad in order to institute a new constitution and democratic elections. Ms Mogherini highlighted the importance of maintaining the cessation of hostilities on the ground, and of political negotiations being started alongside this. She noted that there had been no direct discussions thus far, and underlined the urgency of advancing the peace process.

Both parties affirmed the joint priority of deepening counter-terrorism coordination and cooperating on the prevention of radicalisation.

In addition, Federica Mogherini announced that a Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) ministerial meeting would be held in Brussels in July, during which the negotiations for an EU-GCC free trade negotiation would be addressed.

Ms Mogherini noted that there is a willingness on both sides to reach an agreement and stated that there are only minor issues left to be resolved. She noted that the EU would be *“flexible to find ways of accommodating different views,”* in a mutually beneficial deal.



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## Counter-terrorism

### Making great strides to cut off terror financing

**The Ministry of Interior's security spokesman, Major General Al-Turki spoke out this month about Saudi Arabia being a major target of terrorist organisations. The Kingdom is determined to defeat this threat and prevent terrorists from using any of its resources.**

"We have faced more than 63 terrorist attacks by Al-Qaeda and ISIL, 26 of them just in the last two years," said Gen. Al-Turki. "More than 200 citizens and policemen were killed in terrorist attacks. More than 2,800 suspects have been arrested since 2015."

In order to crush terrorism and cut off terror financing, the Kingdom has enforced laws to criminalize all terrorist-related activities, including joining, supporting, or recruiting for extremist groups. Saudi Arabia has taken major steps to prevent radicalization and recruiting, and has provided citizens with a phone number to report any suspected terror-related activities.

The Kingdom has established a financial intelligence department to monitor any suspect financial transactions. Investigations are done in coordination with the Saudi Monetary Agency and

banks. The Intelligence Security Department within the Ministry of Interior coordinates investigations in order to monitor any abnormal transactions and will freeze accounts where necessary. "This has led to convicting more than 226 persons of terrorism financing activities, prosecuting more than 240 suspects, freezing and investigating more than 117 suspected bank accounts and closing all unlicensed charity collection locations," said Gen. Al-Turki.

"We have contributed to international community efforts to combat terrorism and its finance through exchanging information," he said, and said that some of that information had played a major role in "saving lives in other countries."

Gen. Al-Turki also noted that the King Salman Center for Relief and Humanitarian Aid is responsible for any external charitable contributions from Saudi Arabia or Saudi citizens.

Saudi Arabia co-chairs the Counter ISIL Finance Group, along with the U.S. and Italy. The CIFG was established in 2015 to disrupt ISIL's sources of revenue and its ability to move and use funds to wage its campaign of terror.

## US-Saudi Relations

### Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman rounds off productive visit to the US

Saudi Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman visited the United States this month accompanied by a large delegation including the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Energy, the Minister of Trade and Investment and the Minister of Culture and Information, as well as officials. The aim of the visit was to reinforce the historic and strategic relationship between the Kingdom and the US, and to exchange views and ideas on issues of the day, and on challenges that the two countries face in the region and in the world.



The Prince held a series of meetings with President Barack Obama, Secretary of State John Kerry, Secretary of Defense Ash Carter, a bipartisan delegation of legislators from the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, as well as business leaders from the private sector.

The President and the Deputy Crown Prince discussed themes of security cooperation and economic reform. President Obama expressed appreciation for Saudi Arabia's contributions to the campaign against ISIL. On Syria, they reaffirmed the importance of supporting the cessation of hostilities and a political transition away from Assad. The President and Deputy Crown Prince also agreed to build support for Libya's Government of National Accord.

With regard to Yemen, the President welcomed Saudi Arabia's commitment to concluding a political settlement of the conflict and of GCC support to address urgent humanitarian needs and to rebuild the country.

The timing of the visit by the Deputy Crown Prince was significant because it follows the announcement of Saudi Vision 2030, an economic roadmap built around three primary themes: a vibrant society, a thriving economy and an ambitious nation. President Obama commended the Deputy Crown Prince's commitment to reforming Saudi Arabia's economy and underscored strong US support for achieving the recently-announced Vision 2030 goals, reaffirming the strategic partnership between the US and Saudi Arabia.

## Vision 2030

### Saudi Arabia Recognised as Top Emerging Market

**Citigroup's head of Middle East investment banking has praised the privatization of state enterprises contemplated by Saudi Vision 2030, which he says represents the biggest investment banking opportunity currently found in emerging markets.**

Omar Iqtidar, Citigroup's head of investment banking in the Middle East, noted that Saudi Vision 2030 "could translate into a fantastic wallet for the investment banks." "We are seeing momentum picking up, with sceptics increasingly converted into believers of the restructuring," Iqtidar said.

Citigroup last year won approval to trade Saudi Arabian equities, its first banking license since exiting the country in 2004, in September 2015. The bank is directly investing in companies listed on the Saudi Stock Exchange after the stock market opened to direct foreign investment last June.

Citigroup is not alone among investment banks for their renewed interest in the Kingdom. Saudi Arabia's stock exchange, the biggest in the Middle East and Africa, has hired HSBC Saudi Arabia Ltd. as a financial adviser for its initial public offering, which is scheduled for 2018.

As part of the plan outlined by Saudi Vision 2030, the Kingdom has set a goal to increase foreign direct investment from 3.8 percent of Gross Domestic Product to the international level of 5.7 percent of GDP. The Kingdom has also made a commitment to restructure the King Abdullah Financial District in Riyadh. The district will be transformed into a special zone that has competitive regulations and procedures, with visa exemptions, and directly connected to the King Khaled International Airport. The King Abdullah Financial District will be the headquarters of the Public Investment Fund, which will contribute to creating an environment attractive to financial, investment and other corporations.



### King Salman holds talks with Mahmoud Abbas

King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud received Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas at Al Salam Palace in Jeddah on 20 June. The King reaffirmed to the President Abbas the firm position of the Kingdom towards the Palestinian cause and the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.



### Vision 2030

#### Microsoft vows to make Vision 2030 a reality

Deputy Crown Prince Muhammad Bin Salman met with Satya Narayana Nadella, chief executive officer of Microsoft, at the IT giant's office in San Francisco on 21 June

During the meeting, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed, under which Microsoft will train young Saudis and will support the Kingdom in its ambitious digital and knowledge-based innovation transformation under Vision 2030.

Microsoft also committed to boost the

Decision Making Support Center at the Royal Court by setting up systems and operational programs with the help of a team of Microsoft experts.

Speaking on the occasion, Nadella expressed Microsoft's keenness to enter into partnership with Saudi Arabia in its initiative to transform into a digital Kingdom. "Microsoft will come out with technology to translate the Vision 2030 into a reality, with a focus on human capital and innovation, and we aspire to achieve it as early as possible," he said.

### Humanitarian Relief

#### KSRelief support Yemeni women and children

Since its inception, King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre has done its best to assist those in need across all Yemeni governorates.

The most important projects implemented by the centre and its partners have focussed on women and children. One of the centre's first projects involved providing medical care to more than 7,600 displaced children and mothers in Djibouti. This project was carried out in cooperation with UNICEF, with a total expenditure of €309,652.

Another project was put in place in response to an urgent UN flash appeal for immediate humanitarian assistance to Yemen; this €26.2 million project was again carried out in coordination with UNICEF.

The project provided food, therapeutic and preventative interventions to save the lives of children under the age of five, and also provided protection for the health of pregnant and nursing mothers.

In total, the organisation has spent almost €200 million euros on improving the lives of millions of women and children in Yemen

### They said...

>> "Saudi Arabia has taken in almost 2.4 million Syrians, of whom between 6 and 7 hundred thousand still remain. Over the past 18 months, Saudi Arabia has taken in almost a million Yemenis, of whom about 7 or 8 hundred thousand still remain. None of them is in a refugee camp. None of them lives in a tent. King Salman, decreed last summer that any Syrian or Yemeni who comes to Saudi Arabia, be immediately provided with a work permit, so they can have legal status. They can get jobs. They have access to healthcare, and their children can go to schools. We want them to lead an honorable and decent life, not live in tents or refugee camps. So we have taken in many as guests. And they are free to stay in Saudi Arabia until the crisis is over and their homes are rebuilt."

Adel al-Jubeir. Saudi Foreign Minister

### In Brief

>> "Saudi Arabia's vision 2030 embodies a guarantee of a better future for the nation and its people," said the Kingdom's permanent representative to the United Nations and International Organizations in Geneva Faisal Trad at the opening of the UN Human Rights Council on 14 June at the 32nd round which lasts until the first of July 2016.

>> OIC launches 1st edition of Ramadan Photo Competition

The competition encourages contestants to portray in photos Ramadan's spirituality, generosity, spirit of sharing, gathering, diverse Muslims' traditions and cultures during Ramadan, which all fall within the OIC's objectives of promoting Islamic solidarity, brotherhood and cultural awareness. To enter the competition, you can visit [www.oic-oci.org](http://www.oic-oci.org).

